

Firefighter Sanner has worked throughout his career to serve the people of Somerset County. On behalf of Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District, I thank him for his work to protect life and property in our community and wish him continued health, safety, and success.

## MSI STEM ACHIEVEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 17, 2021*

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the United States is facing grave challenges on many fronts. We are only beginning to emerge from a global pandemic, with the outlook still uncertain. Our critical infrastructure, our Federal agencies, and companies across all sectors are being hacked. We are racing to mitigate the destructive effects of climate change. Our economic competitiveness is threatened as competitors like China invest heavily in science and technology.

To solve these problems, we need a cadre of trained scientists and engineers pushing the boundaries of what we know and what we can achieve. So far, we have led the world in science and innovation with a STEM workforce that does not come close to representing the diversity of our nation. When a Black woman, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, is at the center of developing the mRNA vaccine that is helping us conquer the pandemic, we treat it as exceptional, instead of expected. If we maintain such a narrow perspective on who should be a scientist, if we continue to leave behind so much of our nation's brainpower, we cannot succeed.

The good news is, we have highly successful models for increasing the diversity of STEM graduates. Minority serving institutions have long played a critical role in training and educating students of color in STEM fields. Student bodies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are the most diverse in the nation. These and other minority serving institutions (MSIs) offer access to STEM education and a pathway to research or other STEM careers to students who might otherwise have limited opportunities. MSIs employ tailored initiatives, policies, and practices that meet students where they are, academically, financially, and socially, while moving students toward higher levels of academic achievement.

For instance, HBCUs play an outsized role in educating African American STEM graduates. While HBCUs make up only 3 percent of the nation's colleges and universities, they graduate 32 percent of African American students earning bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences, 29 percent in mathematics, and 27 percent in the biological sciences. One quarter of African Americans with STEM PhDs earned their bachelor's degree at an HBCU.

MSIs have a proven track record of recruiting, retaining, and graduating underrepresented minority students with STEM degrees. However, more investment and outreach is needed to enable MSIs to fully realize their potential to contribute to the STEM workforce. The MSI STEM Achievement Act pro-

vides for increased transparency, accountability, and accessibility of Federal STEM education and research funding for MSIs. The bill directs the Government Accountability Office to compile an inventory of programs targeted to MSIs and make recommendations for how agencies can increase competitiveness of MSIs in such programs. The bill also supports research on the challenges and successes MSIs have had in contributing to the STEM workforce, including support for MSI Centers of Innovation to help scale up successful practices pioneered at MSIs. Finally, the bill requires the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to issue policy guidance for Federal science agencies to improve outreach to MSIs in order to increase awareness of and competitiveness in agency funding opportunities.

I want to thank Rep. WALTZ for joining me in introducing this bipartisan legislation. I also want to thank the 24 organizations and institutions that have endorsed H.R. 2027.

MSIs have charted a course to developing the diverse STEM workforce we need to ensure continued leadership in science and innovation. Let us empower these institutions, and others, to build on that success. I look forward to seeing a companion in the Senate and working with my colleagues in both bodies to get this legislation enacted.

## CHIEF STANDING BEAR NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

SPEECH OF

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 12, 2021*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 810, legislation which authorizes the Department of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study of the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail.

From his birth on the banks of the Niobrara River in Nebraska until his death in 1908, Chief Standing Bear spent his life in a constant struggle to gain equality and justice for Native Americans.

Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe were forced in 1877 by federal treaty to leave their homeland in Nebraska for Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma.

The hardship of travel and the conditions of Indian Territory caused the deaths of many members of the tribe, including Chief Standing Bear's son.

Determined to bury his son in his homeland, Chief Standing Bear led 30 members of his tribe back to Nebraska, where federal authorities detained him.

As a result, Chief Standing Bear became the first Native American recognized as a person in a federal court decision rendered in Omaha at the trial following his return.

Standing Bear's case, *United States, ex rel. Standing Bear, v. George Crook*, started in May 1879. The U.S. government argued, "that [Standing Bear] was neither a citizen, nor a person, so he could not sue the government."

Standing Bear's lawyers argued that under the Fourteenth Amendment, Standing Bear and his fellow Ponca were both citizens and people and entitled to the same constitutional rights as other citizens of the United States.

The court fundamentally agreed with Standing Bear, writing, "That an Indian is a PERSON within the meaning of the laws of the United States . . ."

Following the decision, the judge released Standing Bear and his people, and they returned to their lands by the Niobrara where Standing Bear finally buried his son.

The Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail tracks the 550-mile path traces the journey the native Poncas were forced to make in 1877 to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

The trail also marks the route the tribe took in 1879, when they returned to their homelands in present-day Nebraska.

The nation has invested a great deal in protecting national parks and historic places due to their unique beauty, typographical features, or historic relevance.

The stories that make up the American experience have, for far too long, been limited to those of one group of Americans.

The limited view of what is of value or interest to the American public has changed with the establishment of a Native American History Museum and most recently the opening of the National African American History and Culture on the Mall.

The "whites-only" version of American history must end and at the same time we can make room for other American stories.

The history of the United States is more complex and immensely richer than would be apparent if we only consider the history of one group of people.

For this reason, last Congress I rose in support of the Emancipation National Historic Trail Act, which helped establish the Emancipation National Historical Trail, which will tell the story of African Americans and will preserve for future generations the rich history of the newlyfreed slaves who journeyed to Houston in search of economic and political opportunity, and greater religious and cultural freedom.

Similarly, the development and designation of the Chief Standing Bear trail is one more important step in the ongoing goal to educate the public about Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca tribe's forced relocation to Oklahoma.

This story transcends race, ethnicity, culture, and serves as a starting point to bringing about a greater understanding of tribal sovereignty, tribal rights, human rights, and equality for all peoples.

The establishment of this trail will increase the general public's knowledge and awareness of the story of Ponca Chief Standing Bear, including his journey to Oklahoma and back and the historic court case in Omaha.

For this reason, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in support of H.R. 810.

## HONORING FIREFIGHTER RANDY DIRIENZO

**HON. JOHN JOYCE**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 18, 2021*

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Firefighter Randy Dirienzo for his 36 years of service with the Meyersdale Volunteer Fire Department in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.